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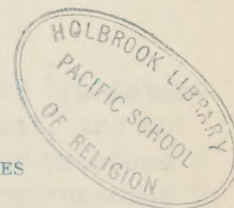
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the WORLD ALLIANCE of YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATIONS
the WORLD'S YOUNG WOMEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION
the WORLD'S STUDENT CHRISTIAN FEDERATION
the WORLD COUNCIL of CHRISTIAN EDUCATION



The aim of the Ecumenical Press Service is to keep its readers informed of trends of thought and opinion in and about the Churches and Christian movements. It is therefore not to be held responsible for opinions expressed in its news items.

No. 8

Sixteenth Year

February 25, 1949

SOUTH AFRICA

The Christian Council and the Government

The Christian Council of South Africa announces that, after repeated approaches (see E.P.S. No. 46, 1948), the Prime Minister has declined to receive a deputation from certain Churches and Missions associated with the Christian Council, who sought to present to the Prime Minister their views on the Government's non-European policies (i.e. the segregation of races) in the light of the Christian teaching.

The following personalities had been proposed as members of the deputation; the Archbishop of Cape Town, representing the Church of the Province of South Africa; the President of the Methodist Church of South Africa, the Deputy of the Congregational Union of South Africa; the Deputy of the Baptist Union of South Africa and the South African Baptist Missionary Society; the General Secretary of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa; a representative of the Swiss Mission in South Africa; the Deputy of the Swedish Mission in South Africa; the Deputy of the American Board of Mission in South Africa; the Vice-President of the Christian Council of South Africa; possibly a Bishop of the Roman Catholic Church in South Africa.

After having submitted this list to the Prime Minister, accompanied by the wording and contents of the resolutions adopted by the Christian Council, the Prime Minister's Secretary answered the Council on January 31, 1949, saying:

"The Prime Minister considers the views expressed in these resolutions and the terms in which they are couched, as extremely one-sided and exaggerated. Besides, apart from their present political intent they obviously, though impliedly, stigmatise the existing as well as the traditional policy of the country as unjust, anti-Christian and immoral.

"As far as the reference to the alleged demands of Scripture and Christianity is concerned, the Prime Minister disagrees with the interpretation in terms of political theory and practice, contained in these resolutions, and finds himself unable to agree that such interpretation ever can be the monopoly of any particular person or Church or group of Churches.

"In these circumstances the Prime Minister cannot regard the interview you desire otherwise than as an opportunity to lodge a protest, and not for the purpose of discussion or enlightenment. As the views your proposed deputation obviously holds are already sufficiently and capably represented in the field of party-political discussion and further with a view to the Prime Minister's recent renewed attempt to have the Native question dealt with on a non-party basis, he does not think that the proposed interview can serve any useful purpose".

E.P.S. Geneva

CHINA

Christians in Communist-held Manchuria

In an interview given to "Religious News Service" (New York) a Chinese churchman in Shanghai gave a general picture of the conditions under which Christians are living and working in Communist-held Manchuria.

"The morale of Christians in Manchuria is high", he said. "Churches are crowded as never before. On the other hand, there are indications, in some places at least, that organised worship will have to cease.

"Communists regard churches as public buildings and hold all kinds of meetings in them. In some places, there has been no interference with church services, but in others, public meetings have been scheduled at the exact hour set for worship and church people have had to yield.

"Pastors are forbidden to raise funds for the support of the Church. So far, no attempts to take over church properties have been reported.

"Mission schools have not been interrupted but they have been forbidden to accept fees from students. Similarly, Christian hospitals have been asked to carry on but are not allowed to accept payment for their services. Relief work by the Churches has been frowned on, apparently because the Communists see it as a means to curry favour with the poor.

"Can the Church survive under these conditions? From the mass of reports, these general answers emerge; only those Churches will survive which have determined leaders, unafraid to negotiate and wrest concessions from Communist authorities.

"Communist authorities are definitely more friendly to Chinese churchmen than to foreigners, so the Chinese must carry an increasing share of the organisational responsibility.

"The Church must expand its social programme and find trained personnel to carry it on - social workers, doctors and others with definite technical skills which the Communist can appreciate. Pastors must serve without pay."

On the whole all the reports arriving in Shanghai emphasise that present conditions are a crucial test and whatever situations may arise, "the Church must not retreat".

E.P.S. Geneva

Church World Service in 1948

During 1948, the American Protestant and Eastern Orthodox Churches achieved, for the third consecutive year, an outstanding record in the field of overseas relief and reconstruction, sending through Church World Service more than \$16,000,000 in funds and relief supplies to aid in rebuilding the physical and spiritual structure in many impoverished lands.

The total figure for 1948 surpassed that of 1947 by more than one million dollars. Altogether, since Church World Service was formed in 1946, about \$40,000,000 in funds and supplies have been channelled overseas through it.

The aid, consisting of food, clothing, medicines, religious literature, prefabricated churches and other goods, as well as funds to aid church institutions, pastors, students and refugees, went to more than 40 countries in Europe, Asia and Africa. Besides this, 1250 Displaced Persons were assisted during 1948 by Church World Service in coming to the United States for resettlement, and about 40 theological students were aided in coming to America for seminary study.

Aid was also given to millions of refugees in all parts of the world, including those caught in the midst of the Palestinian conflict, those in Korea, in India and Pakistan, in China, and the hundreds of thousands of other homeless and destitute people in Europe who are not classed as Displaced Persons. Warm clothing, powdered milk and other foods, and needed medicines and drugs, were distributed to many of these refugees, regardless of their race, religion, or political beliefs.

An attempt has been made to help people most in need, and also to encourage the idea of "self-help". This latter is shown by the training projects in several places. In the DP camps, for example, many were taught skills that will assist them in making adjustments wherever they resettle. Similar projects are supported in Pakistan where thousands of Christian natives are without jobs because of the mass migration there of a year ago; in China where agricultural rehabilitation has been of importance in the flood areas.

Another phase of the reconstruction programme was that of helping rebuild churches, especially in Germany, Austria, and Japan. In the former two, local congregations were helped in financing the rebuilding of their churches, in many cases rubble and salvaged material being used. Sixty-seven prefabricated church buildings, mission schools and pastors' homes were shipped to Japan.

Religious literature, including theological libraries for pastors and seminaries, hymn books for churches in Japan and Okinawa, and thousands of other books and periodicals were sent to various countries. In several countries pastors' rest homes were set up, youth camps were sponsored, and students were assisted with food and clothing.

E.P.S. Geneva

AUSTRIADistribution of Bibles

The United Bible Societies report that the British and Foreign Bible Society has distributed nearly 47,000 copies of the Scriptures in 1948 as against only 40,000 in the previous year. The sum given by the Austrian Bible Committee

for Bible work exceeded by 7,000 shillings the amount originally promised for this work, thus making it possible for the agent to make a wider distribution.
E.P.S. Geneva

SCOTLANDPart of the Bible Printed in Tamahaq

The first part of the Bible to be printed in Tamahaq, a language spoken by the veiled Tuaregs of the Sahara Desert, has now been published by the National Bible Society of Scotland. It is the Book of Ruth, chosen because most of the scholarly work among the Tuaregs is done by women missionaries for womenfolk for whom the story of Ruth should have a special appeal. EPS. Geneva

UNITED STATESTowards the Merger of the Congregational Christian Churches with the Evangelical & Reformed Church

The General Council of the Congregational Christian Churches has taken a final vote on the question of reunion with the Evangelical and Reformed Church, at its special session held in Cleveland at the beginning of February.

The recommendations favouring the merger presented by the denomination's Commission on Inter-Church Relations and Christian Unity held:

"That the percentage of Congregational Christian Churches approving the basis of union is sufficient to warrant consummation of the merger;

"That consummation be contingent upon the approval of the General Synod of the Evangelical and Reformed Church 'in order that both parties may be united in their understanding and acceptance' of the union;

"That the General Council instruct its executive committee to assign quotas to the several Conferences which will make it possible to assign 300 delegates to the first conference of the General Synod of the new united Church".

As to the Evangelical and Reformed Church, a special session of its General Synod will be held at Cleveland on April 20-21, to vote on the proposed merger with the Congregational Christian Churches.
E.P.S. Geneva

CZECHOSLOVAKIAGrowing Number of Lutheran Theological Students

The Slovakian Lutheran magazine "Cirkevne Listy" publishes a report on the activity of the Slovakian Evangelical Theological Faculty at Bratislava in 1948. Three new lecturers were appointed. The number of theological students is growing. There is hope that in a few years the present shortage of pastors will be overcome. The need for more pastors in this Church has become more urgent especially because about 30,000 fresh Protestant immigrants from Bulgaria, Roumania and Hungary have settled in Slovakia.
E.P.S. Geneva

CHINAThe Gospel in Prison

In the summer of 1948 a communication from the International Missionary Council requested the National Christian Council of China to investigate "the plight of Japanese imprisoned in China for war crimes, or being held as suspects for trial".

The Bible was released by Y.O.O. officials the same day. The Bible was released by Y.O.O. officials the same day. The Bible was released by Y.O.O. officials the same day.

UNITED STATES

Part of the Bible Printed in America

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In fact, 346 men were detained in a camp at Kiangwan, Shanghai, all but ten adjudged as war criminals. The commander of the camp urged that religious services should be held weekly and with speakers to share ideas to broaden the horizon of the prisoners.

The Christian forces in Shanghai responded. They take turns to have afternoon vesper services, music, Scripture, preaching. A former student in Japan preaches in Japanese; at other times the preaching is in English and translated into Japanese. 261 men in the prison asked the China Bible House for New Testaments. The Christian Literature Society placed a hundred books in the Library.

There in the cells a wonderful transformation is taking place. Letters from the prisoners to the pastors and Churches show what is felt. "It is the Way of Christ which has given life to suffering souls", writes one. At the end of his letter, another wrote the Lord's Prayer and said that day and night he was reading the Scripture and offering prayer from the depth of his heart.

At the end of a Sunday afternoon service the preacher asked: "How many of you want to be Christians?" Immediately a hundred hands were raised. Earnest requests for baptism have been coming in from the prisoners. Finally 27 candidates stood before the baptismal font in the prison on January 25, 1949. All of them made their confession of faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour. On January 29, these men embarked on a Navy transport to be returned to Japan, with their baptismal certificates among their prized papers. E.P.S. Geneva

BULGARIA

Church Bill Introduced

The Bulgarian Foreign Minister, Mr. W. Kolarof, on February 17 introduced a Bill to defend the "canonical purity of the Bulgarian Churches".

In the preamble it is stated that "Bulgarian citizens are already assured of liberty of belief and of conscience", but that the new law is "to ensure the full independence of the Churches in Bulgaria". The law forbids "all Churches and sects having their headquarters in other countries to maintain branches in Bulgaria". Where such religious communities already exist in Bulgaria, "these shall close down four weeks after the Bill shall become law and their property shall, with due compensation, revert to the State".

Should a pastor of any Church wish "to continue canonical relations with ecclesiastical institutions abroad, or to receive assistance from them or from other sources outside Bulgaria", he must "obtain the previous permission of the Bulgarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs".

Church offices may only be borne by such citizens as "have not forfeited their civic rights", and have thus "proved trustworthy". Although the Church in Bulgaria is disestablished, it is nevertheless "to be accorded State assistance where necessary".

The Orthodox Church, to which the majority of Bulgarians belong, will be known as "the traditional Church of the Bulgarian nation, since it is in its whole structure and spirit a democratic national Church". EPS. Geneva

To start with, Catholics had been very disappointed, and there had been talk of a regression, of a return to the "branch" theory and so forth. Fr. Rouquette, however, appeared convinced that a most important step forward had been taken. There was a possibility of more than one road's opening up towards a rapprochement - the search for basic points, the search for a doctrinal compromise, the primary importance accorded to practical action (if agnosticism was here involved, it would be unacceptable, but a pedagogical attitude would be both wise and serviceable).

The dialectical method followed at Amsterdam represented an undoubted step forward on each of these three paths, keeping the Churches in a state of tension between dogmatic structures whose effect might well be a renewal of vitality; cf. the attitude of the children of Israel in their tension between the need to fulfil the law and the sorrow of their powerlessness to do so.

Father Maurice Villain, of the "Istina" Catholic study centre in Paris, sets forth "a Roman Catholic's point of view" in an article in the review "Verbum Caro" of Neuchâtel, Switzerland, in its issue of December 1948. In conclusion, he states his conviction that "Rome's absence from the Amsterdam Assembly still entails a presence, and, beyond all doubt, a prayer. If Amsterdam faced Catholics with a vast question-mark on what, in the light of the Spirit, they should reflect, it is in that same light that we venture to invite you, our Protestant brethren, to think over Rome's refusal to join... What is clear to us is dark to you, and vice versa. On both sides there is mystery and there is suffering".

Though the importance of the great ecumenical gatherings must not be underestimated, it should still be recognised that "the most effective work will always be achieved in more intimate encounters, in an atmosphere of retreat and devotion and by the use of a serious method. Encounters of this kind do not, as far as we know, come under the interdict of the Vatican's Monitum".

E.P.S.Geneva

FRANCE

Orthodox Course on Ecumenism

A course on church unity and ecumenism, planned by the Board after the Amsterdam Assembly, has just begun at the French Orthodox Institute of St. Denis. The first lecture, presenting the Orthodox viewpoint of the Constantinople and the Moscow Patriarchates, was given by the Rector, Father Euphrasios Kovalevsky, before an audience which included a number of representatives of the various confessions. Future lectures will be given by Protestant and Catholic theologians on the positions of their respective Churches.

E.P.S.Geneva

INDONESIA

Pastor Iskandar Released

We are informed that Pastor Iskandar, who was recently arrested in Surabaya (see E.P.S. No. 6), has now been released by the Netherlands authorities in Indonesia.

E.P.S.Geneva

GERMANYViews from the Eastern Zone

"Men in the Eastern Zone who belong to the Evangelical Church betray in their faces and their bearing what a crisis is upon them, involving the ultimate problems of Christian existence".

This comment by an observer in the report published on work among men organised by an Evangelical Land Church in the Soviet-occupied Zone of Germany is followed by this reasoned exposition of the situation:

"The separation of Church and State, the removal of religious instruction from school time-tables and so on do not constitute either persecution or martyrdom of Christians. Technically everything is as it should be. The Word of God may be preached with complete freedom to all those who wish to hear it. Sermons may be delivered, sacraments administered and the spiritual ministry exercised. Open attacks on the Church are confined to occasional outbursts by petty officials with a grievance, and have no particular significance. The expression of any openly anti-Christian or anti-ecclesiastical bias is discouraged. Official quarters still assert their unlimited tolerance". And yet he speaks of a crisis. Why?

"In no Land", he goes on, "which is now within the sphere of State totalitarianism in its most accentuated form are there any longer any Christian illusions. The crisis does not consist in the calling in question of all the outwardly secure things in life, but in the way in which State and society are setting themselves up in conscious disregard of the requirement that they should be the order of God on earth. At the focal point stands man, knowing himself to be the ultimate and supreme value. But above all the crisis consists in the clear realisation which Christians have gained in the course of this development that the situation means nothing more nor less than the laying bare of the individual, in which process it becomes evident that the whole organisation of the world, even what is supposedly Christian, bears the characteristic stamp of human insurgency against the absolute claims of God."

The crisis thus consists in the fact that the Christian, entrusted with a message which carries with it an inescapable responsibility, is thrust into a world which allows, though it does not recognise, the proclamation of this message in the sphere of private existence, but which bursts into furious abuse for reactionary tendencies and high treason when expression is given to the demands arising from this message. They must be expressed. But that is just the difficulty for the Christian - "the Church and the individual have no chance of availing themselves of various powers and forces in the world, of using them as points on a Christian programme, or as auxiliary troops. The Christian, with all his sufferings and anxieties, is thrown for help upon God."

E.P.S.Geneva

GERMANYDr Niemöller President of the Fraternal Council

The National Fraternal Council of the Confessing Church at its meeting in Darmstadt on February 18 unanimously elected Dr Martin Niemöller as its President.

E.P.S.Geneva

